

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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R 091255Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1729

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 7356

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH MINISTER ADEL OSSEIRAN SEPT 8.

REF: BEIRUT 5939

1. SUMMARY: IN ONE-HOUR MEETING ON SEPT. 8, MINISTER OSSEIRAN DISCUSSED NEED FOR PALESTINIAN HOMELAND, RADICALIZATION OF THE LEBANESE LEFT, SYRIAN POLICY ON LEBANON, AND RECENTLY INCREASED MILITARY ACTIVITY IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. END SUMMARY.

2. CHARGE CALLED ON MINISTER OF JUSTICE, PUBLIC WORKS, ECONOMY AND COMMERCE ADEL OSSEIRAN SEPT. 8. OSSEIRAN OPENED DISCUSSION BY EXPRESSING DISMAY OVER SLOW DESTRUCTION OF LEBANON, PARTICULARLY ITS MOST VALUABLE RESOURCES-- ITS HUMAN POTENTIAL. HE SAID U.S. MUST ACT TO PREVENT FURTHER CARNAGE AND
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DESTRUCTION. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION AS TO WHAT

USG SHOULD DO, OSSEIRAN SAID U.S. MUST PUT PRESSURE ON ISRAEL TO PERMIT CREATION OF PALESTINIAN STATE ON WEST BANK, SINCE PALESTINIAN QUESTION IS THE HEART OF THE LEBANESE PROBLEM. ONLY IF PALESTINIANS HAD SOMEWHERE ELSE TO GO WOULD THEY HAVE LEBANON AND THUS PERMIT LEBANESE TO WORK OUT SOLUTIONS TO THEIR INTERNAL DISPUTES. IN RESPONSE TO CHARGE'S OBSERVATION THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR US TO PUT PRESSURE ON ISRAEL WHEN PLO REFUSED TO ACCEPT RESOLUTION 242, OSSEIRAN REPLIED "THEY WILL HAVE TO" HE NOTED ARAB LEAGUE DECISION TO ADMIT PLO TO FULL MEMBERSHIP MIGHT ENCOURAGE PALESTINIANS TO FORM A GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE. (GHASSAN TUEINI URGED PLO TO DO THIS IN A FRONT-PAGE EDITORIAL IN AN-NAHAR SEPT 8.) ONCE PALESTINIANS HAD A GOVERNMENT, IT WOULD BE EASIER TO FIND A WAY TO BRING THEM INTO NEGOTIATIONS.

3. OSSEIRAN SAID IT WAS IN U.S. INTEREST TO ENCOURAGE SYRIA TO WORK FOR SOLUTION IN LEBANON SINCE CONTINUING HOSTILITIES WERE LEADING TO INCREASING RADICALIZATION OF LEBANESE LEFT. "A FATHER CAN NO LONGER PREVENT HIS SON FROM JOINING THE COMMUNISTS." HE SAID THAT PARTICULARLY IN SOUTHERN LEBANON (OSSEIRAN HAS LARGE LAND HOLDINGS IN THE SIDON AREA), THE SHIA POPULATION WAS BECOMING INCREASINGLY LEFT-WING AND COMMUNIST AS RESULT OF PALESTINIAN INFLUENCE. UNLESS FIGHTING WERE STOPPED SOON, LEBANON WAS LIKELY TO BCOME A RADICAL STATE, LESS FRIENDLY TO THE U.S.

4. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS ABOUT PRESENT POLITICAL-MILITARY SITUATION, OSSEIRAN SAID HE DID NOT THINK SYRIA WOULD MAKE A DRAMATIC MILITARY MOVE PRIOR TO INAUGURATION OF PRESIDENT SARKIS ON SEPT 23. THE SYRIANS, HE SAID, ARE CAUTIOUS AND WILL NOT BE RUSHED; THEY MUST ALSO CONSIDER THEIR RELATIONS WITH OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES AND EVEN WITH THE PALESTINIANS THEMSELVES OVER THE LONG RUN. HE DID NOT EXCLUDE, HOWEVER, POSSIBILITY THAT ONCE SARKIS IS IN OFFICE, SYRIA MIGHT CONCLUDE A MILITARY ALLIANCE WITH HIM

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WHICH WOULD GIVE THEIR FORCES GREATER LEGAL STANDING IN LEBANON AND GREATER FREEDOM OF ACTION. OSSEIRAN ALSO DOUBTED THAT THE CHRISTIANS WOULD MAKE MAJOR MILITARY ATTACK DURING NEXT TWO WEEKS, ALTHOUGH HE ADMITTED THAT ONE NEVER KNOWS WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE BACK OF CHAMOUN'S MIND.

5. OSSEIRAN REFERRED TO RECENT REPORTS OF INCREASING

MILITARY ACTIVITY IN SOUTHERN LEBANON AND INDICATED THAT HE BELIEVED STORIES THAT A NUMBER OF CHRISTIAN TROOPS HAD BEEN SENT TO THE SOUTH VIA JOUNIEH AND ISRAEL TO OPPOSE LEFTIST/PALESTINIAN MOVES. THIS CONFLICT, HE SAID, MIGHT PROMPT SYRIANS TO MOVE TOWARDS THE SAME AREA, ALTHOUGH THEY COULD NOT GO SOUTH OF NABATIYA WITHOUT RISKING AN ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF LEBANON SOUTH OF THE LITANI.

6. OSSEIRAN'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE LEADING LEBANESE PERSONALITIES--SARKIS, SALAM AND KARAME--HAS NOT CHANGED (SEE REFTEL). HE DESCRIBES SARKIS AS A CAUTIOUS MAN. ONCE HE TAKES OVER AS PRESIDENT HE MAY WAIT A MONTH BEFORE ACCEPTING THE RESIGNATIONS OF THE PRESENT CABINET MEMBERS, IN EFFECT LEAVING THEM IN OFFICE AS CARETAKERS, TO GIVE HIM TIME TO CAREFULLY CONSIDER HIS NEXT MOVE. HE SAID THAT JUNBLATT HAS VERY LITTLE ACTIVE SUPPORT AMONG THE DRUZE--THEY ARE SITTING OUT THE WAR. THOSE IN THE CHOUF DID NOT ANSWER HIS CALL TO ARMS, AND THOSE IN THE METN ARE NOT TAKING PART IN THE FIGHTING. JUNBLATT HIMSELF IS MOTIVATED AT LEAST PARTLY BY PERSONAL AMBITION. HE WANTS TO BE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC AND, IF HE CANNOT SUCCEED, HE IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT THE LEADERSHIP OF SOUTH LEBANON AS AN ALTERNATIVE.

7. COMMENT: MINISTER OSSEIRAN'S COMMENTS APPEARED TO BE LESS COMPREHENSIVE AND PERCEPTIVE THAN HIS REMARKS TO AMBASSADOR SEELYE TWO MONTHS AGO (REFTEL). HE TALKED MUCH MORE LIKE AN AGING FEUDAL POLITICIAN, WHICH HE IS, THAN LIKE AN ELDER STATESMAN. HE MAY BE DISTRACTED BY HIS DUTIES AS MINISTER OF ECONOMY WHICH MAKE HIM RESPONSIBLE FOR KEEPING WEST BEIRUT AND SOUTH

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LEBANON ADEQUATELY SUPPLIED WITH FOOD AND FUEL DURING THIS DIFFICULT PERIOD.
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